

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 AF-04 SAJ-01 SAM-01

PM-03 SP-02 L-01 INR-05 CIAE-00 EB-03 PRS-01 IO-03

SCCT-01 ACDA-10 EURE-00 /063 W

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P R 061053Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1961

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

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USMISSION NATO

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AMEMBASSY VIENNA

SECDEF WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USNMR SHAPE BRUSSELS BEL

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

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EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PO

SUBJECT: PRE-ELECTION ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY: EMBASSY SEES SIGNS THAT MODERATE FORCES ARE FINALLY STIRRING IN PORTUGAL. NEVERTHELESS COMMUNISTS DOMINATE CERTAIN KEY SECTORS AND CONTINUE TO PUSH. PRESENT FRAGILE EQUILIBRIUM COULD BE DISRUPTED BY EXTREMIST ACTION FROM RIGHT OR LEFT, BOTH OF WHICH ARE DISTINCT POSSIBILITIES. FRAGMENTATION OF LEFT COUPLED WITH PROSPECTS FOR SETBACK AT POLLS COULD LEAD LEFTIST EXTREMISTS TO OPT FOR INCREASING VIOLENCE IN ORDER TO FORCE GREATER MILITARY INTERVENTION AND/OR NULLIFICATION OF ELECTION RESULTS. MILITARY WILL CONTINUE TO HOLD BALANCE OF POWER. U.S. SHOULD BEGIN TO CONSIDER WELL DESIGNED MILITARY AID PROGRAM. END SUMMARY.

1. WE HAVE NOW TALKED WITH ENOUGH MODERATE LEADERS, BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN, TO BE ABLE TO SAY WITH REASONABLE CONFIDENCE THAT STABILIZING ELEMENTS HAVE COME INTO PLAY IN PORTUGUESE POLITICAL DYNAMIC THESE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS. WHAT SEEMS TO BE OCCURRING IS (1) A REACTION BY THE MODERATE MILITARY TO THE OBVIOUS EXCESSES AND THE INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM, NOT TO SAY SCORN, THAT THEY BRING; (2) A GROWING AWARENESS BY THE YOUNG HYPER-IDEALISTIC AND DETERMINED ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM) LEADERSHIP THAT THEY ARE DEALING WITH COMPLICATED ISSUES FOR WHICH THERE IS NO SIMPLE SOLUTION AND (3) THE EMERGENCE OF NON-COMMUNIST POLITICAL PARTIES AS AN INDEPENDENT FORCE CAPABLE OF HOLDING THEIR OWN IN THE DIALOGUE WITH THE AFM OVER INSTITUTIONALIZATION.

2. THE CRYSTALIZING FACTOR WAS THE FIGHT OVER UNITARY LABOR LAW WHICH DROVE SOCIALISTS AWAY FROM COMMUNISTS. ANTI-COMMUNIST REACTION TO LAW ENABLED COSTA GOMES TO MAKE LONG DELAYED PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT ON ELECTIONS IN FEBRUARY 10 SPEECH. COSTA GOMES IS KNOWN AS A CONCILIATOR WHO IS ABSOLUTELY SURE OF HIS GROUND BEFORE HE MOVES. HIS SPEECH WAS TAKEN AS A SIGN OF NEW LATITUDE FOR ANTI-COMMUNISTS TO REACT. SUBSEQUENT POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS INCLUDE:

A. THE FINAL EMERGENCE OF AN ECONOMIC PROGRAM WHICH SHOULD HELP TO DEFINE IN SOMEWHAT CLEARER FORM THE DIRECTION
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THE AFM INTENDS THE ECONOMY TO TAKE. WHILE PLAN INDULGES IN CONSIDERABLE SOCIALIST RHETORIC IT ALSO CONTAINS AN IMMEDIATE ROLE FOR PRIVATE SECTOR.

B. THE ASSUMPTION BY THE JUNTA OF ADDITIONAL POWERS. MANY CIVILIAN OBSERVERS VIEW THIS AS UNFORTUNATE IN THAT MILITARY POWERS ARE INCREASED VIS-A-VIS CIVILIAN. OTHERS, HOWEVER, SEE THIS AS HELPFUL STEP, ON BALANCE, SINCE COMMUNISTS WERE PUSHING FOR FAR MORE EXTENSIVE POWERS TO BE GRANTED TO YOUNGER AND

MORE RADICAL AFM COORDINATING COMMITTEE.

C. THE STEADY MOMENTUM OF THE COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT ELECTORAL PROCESS IN FACE OF EFFORTS BY PCP AND ITS ALLIES TO CREATE OR FIND REASONS FOR DELAYING OR POSTPONING ELECTIONS.

D. INCREASING CONFIDENCE IN DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PARTIES THAT THE AFM IS REALLY HOLDING A DIALOGUE WITH THEM ON THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION ISSUE, THAT FLEXIBILITY EXISTS AND THAT AN ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISE CAN EMERGE.

3. OTHER SIGNS ARE THE EFFORTS THE GOVERNMENT IS MAKING TO INTRODUCE A SMALL ELEMENT OF BALANCE INTO THE STATE RADIO AND TELEVISION STATION MANAGEMENT AND THE PLACING OF MODERATE AFM MEMBER ON THE BOARD OF THE NEWSPAPER SECULO, WHOSE TONE HAS ALREADY CHANGED. THE APPROVAL OF THE U.S. AID PROGRAM AND THE FAVORABLE PRESS PLAY GIVEN TO THE SIGNING CEREMONY ALSO HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED A SIGNIFICANT PLUS. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' STRONG CONDEMNATION OF THE NEWSPAPER THAT CARRIED THE ARTICLE ALLEGING CIA COUP BEFORE END OF MARCH IS ANOTHER INDICATOR OF THE GOP'S DESIRE TO SEEK A MORE BALANCED STANCE. THE AFM COORDINATING COMMITTEE'S RECENT CONDEMNATION OF ELECTION VIOLENCE WAS HELPFUL. THE PASSAGE OF A NEW PRESS LAW WITH RECOURSE TO THE COURTS AND CLEAR GUIDELINES IS SEEN BY DEMOCRATS AS HOPEFUL SIGN. FINALLY, THE GOP HAS CONTINUED TO SUPPORT NATO THROUGH EXERCISE LOCKED GATE, THE HAIG VISIT AND IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS. EVEN THE PCP HAS REFRAINED FROM ATTACKING NATO OUTRIGHT.

4. OF COURSE, THESE ARE STILL ONLY STIRRINGS IN REACTION TO A COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE OF MASSIVE PROPORTIONS, WHICH HAS ALREADY GAINED CONTROL OF THE WORKING MEDIA AND THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND HAS MADE DEEP IF NOT YET DECISIVE INROADS INTO THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AND THE MINISTRY OF LABOR. BUT THEY ARE SIGNIFICANT STIRRINGS, MORE THAN ANYTHING BECAUSE THEY ARE BE-
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GINNING TO GIVE A SENSE OF DIRECTION AND HOPE TO THE FORMERLY DISJOINTED AND INCHOATE MODERATE FORCES. ONE NOW HAS A GREATER SENSE OF EQUILIBRIUM.
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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 AF-04 SAJ-01 SAM-01

PM-03 SP-02 L-01 INR-05 CIAE-00 EB-03 PRS-01 IO-03

SCCT-01 ACDA-10 EURE-00 /063 W

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P R 061053Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1962

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

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5. THE DANGER, OF COURSE, IS THAT THIS EQUILIBRIUM IS VERY FRAGILE AND THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN, LABOR AND STUDENT UNREST, AND ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY WILL INTRODUCE A NUMBER OF STRESSES, ANY ONE OF WHICH COULD THROW PORTUGAL INTO A RENEWED TAILSPIN. THE TWO IMMEDIATE DANGERS ARE AN ATTEMPTED COUP FROM THE RIGHT

AND AN ESCALATING CAMPAIGN OF VIOLENCE FROM THE EXTREME LEFTS.

6. RIGHTIST COUP ATTEMPTS ARE STILL A REAL POSSIBILITY, ALTHOUGH THE MOST SERIOUS PLOTTERS HAVE BEEN ON "HOLD" FOR A MONTH AND SPINOLA DENIES HE INVOLVED. THERE ARE VARIOUS FORMS A COUP COULD TAKE, RUNNING FROM PURGES TO AN OUTRIGHT TAKEOVER. COUNTRY TEAM DOES NOT GIVE A REAL COUP MUCH CHANCE OF SUCCESS, PARTICULARLY IF SPINOLA DOES NOT PARTICIPATE. EVEN IF IT IS SUCCESSFUL IN TOPPLING PRESENT AFM LEADERSHIP, RIGHT WING WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO GOVERN THE COUNTRY OVER THE LONG TERM. THE PRESSURES AND FORCES THAT HAVE BEEN UNLEASHED MUST BE TEMPERED AND GUIDED; THEY CANNOT BE STUFFED BACK INTO THE TUBE.

7. IF THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY IS LIKELY TO EMERGE IN A WEAKENED POSITION FROM FREE ELECTIONS, AS MOST OF OUR CONTACTS ANTICIPATE, IT MAY SEEK TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A CAMPAIGN OF VIOLENCE CARRIED OUT BY EXTREME LEFT. IT COULD EVEN DECIDE COVERTLY TO SUPPORT SUCH AN EFFORT. THIS CAMPAIGN COULD HAVE MULTIPLE GOALS: (1) FORCE A CANCELLATION OF ELECTIONS AND LEFTIST MILITARY INTERVENTION, (2) SET STAGE FOR MANIPULATING RESULTS AND/OR (3) CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS ARE EITHER AFRAID TO GO TO THE POLLS OR AFRAID THE SECRECY OF THEIR VOTE WILL NOT BE RESPECTED. EVEN IF PCP DOES NOT OPT FOR SUCH A STRATEGY, IT HAS NO CONTROL OVER HEDGE-PODGE OF REVOLUTIONARY PARTIES TO THE LEFT OF IT, SOME OF WHICH HAVE ALREADY DECLARED ELECTIONS TO BE A TOTAL CHARADE. LATTER ARE VIRTUALLY CERTAIN TO TRY DISRUPTIVE TACTICS.

8. FRAGMENTATION OF THE LEFT IS AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT PHENOMENON ON LOCAL POLITICAL SCENE. TEN OF THE FIFTEEN PARTIES REGISTERED FOR THE ELECTIONS ARE REVOLUTIONARY GROUPS OF ONE TYPE OR ANOTHER, SIX OF WHICH CAN BE CONSIDERED LEFT OF PCP. PCP IS BEING ATTACKED AS MUCH FROM LEFT AS FROM RIGHT AND IS SUFFERING LOSS OF PRESTIGE. DANGER IS THAT COMMUNISTS MAY DECIDE TO SHIFT TO HIGHER RISK STRATEGY AND TRY TO POLARIZE

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SITUATION. SUCH TACTICS COULD INCLUDE AGITATION TO BAIT THE RIGHT INTO PRECIPITOUS ACTION OR, CONCEIVABLY, EFFORTS TO GALVANIZE THE LEFT BY SOME SORT OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THEM. DESPITE SUPPOSEDLY PACIFIC NATURE OF PORTUGUESE I DO NOT RULE OUT POSSIBILITY OF URBAN TERRORISM IN THIS COUNTRY.

9. WHATEVER FORM IT MAY TAKE -- EITHER AGITATION OR REAL VIOLENCE -- DISRUPTIVE TACTICS BY THE EXTREME LEFT ARE, IN MY JUDGMENT, BIGGEST SHORT-RUN DANGER IN PORTUGAL. WE HAVE SOUGHT TO EMPHASIZE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL SECURITY TO THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH RESPONSIBLE GOP AND AFM LEADERS, RECOGNIZING, HOWEVER, THAT THEY HAVE ONLY LIMITED

CAPABILITY TO CONTROL CIVIL DISTURBANCE. I AM MAKING THIS POINT TO MY WEST EUROPEAN COLLEAGUES, SUGGESTING THEY DO LIKEWISE. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO ENCOURAGE THEM THROUGH OUR EMBASSIES IN RESPECTIVE CAPITALS.

10. IF WE GET THROUGH THE ELECTIONS, AND IF THE AFM ACCEPTS THE RESULTS (A BIG IF), WE MUST THEN TURN OUR ATTENTION TO MEDIUM AND LONG TERM STRATEGY. THIS WILL INVOLVE CONSOLIDATION OF MODERATE FORCES AND GRADUAL ELIMINATION OF COMMUNISTS FROM POSITION OF POWER. MILITARY WILL CONTINUE TO BE CRITICAL TO THIS PROCESS. MY VIEW IS THAT MOST PRODUCTIVE ROLE U.S. COULD PLAY MAY BE IN THE FIELD OF MILITARY AID. SUCH AID MIGHT EVEN BE USEFUL BEFORE ELECTIONS, BUT IN ANY EVENT MUST BE WELL CONCEIVED AND ADROITLY BROACHED WITH PROPER PEOPLE. EMBASSY IS PULLING ITS THOUGHTS TOGETHER NOW ON THIS SUBJECT, BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT FIRST STEP MUST BE THE LONG-DELAYED TERMINATION OF THE MILITARY EMBARGO AGAINST PORTUGAL. WHEN WE MOVE WE MUST BE PREPARED TO MOVE FAST.
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